



SRC Wins & Losses: First Legislative Cut-off 2005

SRC WINS:

Making our streets safer:

- SB 5038 increases penalties for failing to yield to emergency or police vehicles. (Sen. Jim Honeyford, R-Sunnyside).
- HB 1478 increases penalties for failing to secure a load on public highways. (SB 5457, its companion, was sponsored by Sen. Luke Esser, R-Bellevue).

Making health care more affordable:

- SB 5202 requires a study on providing a health savings account option for employees (Sen. Linda Evans Parlette).

Misguided Retro-bution bill dies:

- SB 5842/HB 1875 both died in their respective rules committees. These bills would have added new restrictions to private retrospective ratings programs that help employers save money through safer workplaces.

Keeping kids safer at school:

- An amendment to **Senate Bill 5983** will punish teachers who view pornography at school by suspending or revoking their teaching certificate on the first offense and permanently revoking the certificate for a second offense.

Restoring accountability and integrity to elections:

- Amendments to an omnibus election reform bill (**Senate Bill 5499**) to improving the integrity of our voter rolls by requiring random checks, asking registrants if they are citizens and will be 18 at the time of the election, and color-coding provisional ballots to prevent them from being mistakenly fed into voting machines before verification.

SRC LOSSES:

Payroll tax for family leave moves to House:

The Senate approved a family leave insurance program (**SB 5069**) that taxes employees two-cents-per-hour (\$41/year) and requires people to apply to the Department of Labor & Industries for a \$250/wk. paid leave benefit available for up to five weeks when an employee takes time off to care for a newborn, newly adopted child or sick family member. The program is mandatory for companies with 50 or more employees and optional for employers with fewer than 50 workers. This bill is now before the House of Representatives for consideration.

- **Democrats overturn spending limit initiative to clear the deck for easy passage of taxes:** Defying the will of state voters, Senate Democrats approved a measure to make it easier to raise taxes and increase spending. **Senate Bill 6078** passed on a straight party line vote with Republicans voting a solid "no." Senate Democrats will now be able to pass tax increases with just their 25 votes. Under the bill, the spending limit

SRC AGENDA 2005:

The Senate Republicans' top priority is continuing to get Washington back to work.

We will continue to work with members of both parties and both chambers to build a philosophical majority and address the most important issues facing our state:

- ⇒ Passing a sustainable budget that protects the most vulnerable without new taxes on struggling families;
- ⇒ Encouraging job creation in our recovering economy and preventing legislation that hurts businesses and workers;
- ⇒ Improving access to affordable health insurance products so more small businesses can offer coverage for their employees; and
- ⇒ Approving changes to Washington's elections system to ensure a legitimate voter for every vote and to protect the rights of our military voters.

is now tied to growth in personal income rather than population growth and inflation – a much higher standard that will allow more spending.

- **Addressing the “diploma mill” issue (Sen. Mark Schoesler): SB 5634** would have required credits and degrees earned for teacher a salary increases to be verified by OSPI to ensure they are from accredited institutions. Died in the Senate Early Learning, K-12 and Higher Education Committee. Senate Republicans tried to pull it from committee but the motion was rejected.

Workers’ compensation reforms to help prevent continued double-digit premium increases and improve fairness in workers’ compensation for employers or employees (all died in Senate Labor, Commerce, Research & Development Committee):

- SB 5466 (Sen. Linda Evans Parlette) would have reformed the calculation of injured workers benefits to allow the number of hours worked per day, week, or month to be averaged to obtain the number of hours the worker “normally worked.”
- SB 5665 (Sen. Linda Evans Parlette) would have required timely reporting of industrial accidents.
- SB 5674 (Sen. Linda Evans Parlette) would have simplified and added certainty to the calculation of workers’ compensation benefits.
- SB 5793 (Sen. Jim Honeyford) would have allowed employers and employees in a workers’ compensation claim to enter into a final settlement agreement at any time rather than running through a long line of appeals and litigation.
- SB 5825 (Sen. Linda Evans Parlette) would have eliminated the ability of injured workers to apply for an increase in their rate of time-loss compensation or pension benefits for a “change of circumstances.”
- SB 5826 (Sen. Mike Hewitt) would have changed the calculation of injured workers’ benefits from being based on the state average monthly wage to being based on the Implicit Price Deflator

Increasing minimum wage job opportunities (All died in Senate Labor, Commerce, Research & Development Committee):

- SB 5747 (Sen. Mike Hewitt) would have connected Washington’s automatic minimum wage increases to the state’s unemployment rate.
- SB 5774 (Sens. Eric Poulsen and Linda Evans Parlette) would have allowed employers in specified hospitality-related industries to elect to pay their tipped employees an adjusted minimum tipped wage rate

Limited smoking ban to protect workers and children (Died on 2nd Reading):

- SB 5909 (Sen. Alex Deccio, R-Yakima) would allow smokers and nonsmokers to coexist within single establishments. The bill allows for the designation of smoking areas if separate from nonsmoking areas. Employers are required to notify prospective employees that all or a portion of the establishment is designated as a smoking area, and no one under the age of 18 is permitted to enter a designated smoking area.

Expanding access to affordable health insurance for working families (All died in Senate Health & Long-term Care Committee):

- SB 5982 (Sen. Linda Evans Parlette) would have made employee health care insurance more affordable for small business owners by freeing them from the 47 different health care mandates required in Washington.
- SB 6049 (Sen. Linda Evans Parlette) would have helped make health savings accounts more cost-effective for small businesses

Allowing recourse on King County’s Critical Area Ordinances (Died in Government Operations and Elections Committee)

- Authorizing county commissions or councils to place growth management measures before county voters as a referendum if a growth management hearings board rules that the measure is invalid or out of compliance (Died in Government Operations and Elections Committee)

